

## **4.0 THE UNIVERSITY AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN VISION**

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### **4.1 Overall Vision**

In keeping with University Avenue's key role in the City of Riverside as the major thoroughfare connecting Downtown Riverside and UCR, the Avenue and its adjacent development should have a vital, impressive image. In order to create this image, the land uses adjacent to University Avenue must be revitalized in conjunction with streetscape and other improvements.

The Avenue must become an active, lively, visually attractive thoroughfare. Rather than continuing to be a means for getting from one place to another, it needs to become a "destination" used by the community, the University and visitors. In order to unify the area, a bold urban design, landscaping and architectural concept based on the agricultural history of the region is envisioned. Additionally, the street must interrelate with a multi-modal circulation system serving local vehicular traffic, a shuttle system, bicyclists and pedestrians.

#### **4.1.1 A Glimpse of the Future**

As is noted above, it is the vision of this Plan for University Avenue to become a destination used by the surrounding community, the University, and visitors to the area, not just a place to pass through. In this vision, through traffic would be de-emphasized. The street would be designed to accent the visual, the pedestrian and the ceremonial. As a traffic carrier, it would serve primarily to provide access to the adjacent businesses.

Street trees, especially the existing mature palms, would be used as a prime building block to help make the street aesthetically pleasing, and as friendly to the pedestrian on the sidewalk as to the motorist on the street. New mature palms would be added where the existing pattern is incomplete. To add shade, color and visual interest at a lower level, flowering Chinese Flame Trees would be interspersed with the palms. Along most of the Avenue, the street trees would be planted in beds of flowering ground cover in a landscaped parkway located next to the curb. The vision also calls for the use of historically inspired new street lights which would augment the existing modern street lights and providing better lighting and more appropriate scale in relation to the pedestrian environment.

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The character of the landscaping and the architecture of University Avenue adjacent to the street would be designed to be reminiscent of the history of Riverside. This would include citrus and palm trees, vine covered pergolas and trellises, courtyards, fountains, terra cotta tile roofs, smooth-textured stucco walls, ceramic tile accents, period style lighting, and steel filigree trim.

The design of the streets would encourage pedestrians to walk along the street. These pedestrians would be expected to come from many parts of the surrounding area and from more local sources, including UCR, the surrounding neighborhoods and from the Marketplace project at the west end of the project area. Most buildings and their entrances would be located close to the sidewalk in extensively landscaped areas. Ample parking would be provided at the rear of each site in tree-shaded parking lots screened from the view of adjacent residences. There would be outdoor cafes, restaurants, retail shops, dry cleaners, bakeries, food markets, camera and video stores, beauty salons, medical offices, professional offices, financial institutions and other businesses catering to a broad range of people. University oriented uses would also be present, such as bookstores, coffee houses, record stores, and movie theaters (Figure 8). Gasoline stations, drive-through fast food facilities, auto repair shops, motels, and liquor stores would be less prevalent.

The vision calls for apartment residences, to accommodate the University's growth, to be located in the vicinity of University Avenue in a mixed-use project near UCR, providing more people to support the businesses. The University campus would be expected to expand across the I-215 Freeway, including the University Extension and other campus facilities that are shared by the community. These would provide additional support to the mixed-use and other commercial uses near the University.

The vision calls for University Avenue to remain a four-lane street widened for bike lanes, bus bays and at major intersections to accommodate turning movements. A rubber tire trolley is envisioned to run between downtown and the University, stopping at the Market Place and at key destinations along University Avenue. Landscaped medians and parkways, textured terra cotta colored crosswalks are planned as a means for softening the effects of the widened intersections. Buildings along University Avenue would be designed to create visual interest and a pedestrian scale to the street.

In keeping with the subdistrict concept, it is envisioned that the intensity and height of buildings will vary from the west to east along the Avenue. Near the western end of the corridor adjacent to the Eastside community, from Park Avenue to just west of Chicago Avenue, and where lots are shallow, there would be one- and two-story buildings scaled to

Figure 8 - University Mixed-Use Village Character

be compatible with the adjacent residences. Closer to Chicago Avenue and to the University where there would be larger parcels, taller buildings would be interspersed with the one- and two-story tile roofed structures which are planned to be arranged in village-like patterns with internal landscaped paseos, courtyards, outdoor dining, and a festive atmosphere (Figure 8).

As property redevelops along University Avenue on consolidated parcels, the number of curb cuts are planned to be reduced, which will have the effect of encouraging more bicyclists and pedestrians in the area from the University to Chicago Avenue. Through incentive programs, is envisioned that older businesses will refurbish building exteriors, install new landscaping and replaced pole signs with attractive monument signage.

Using the provisions of this plan and coupling it with the support of the local business community, it is envisioned that University Avenue will become an attractive, safe and exciting place where business owners take pride in the appearance of their properties and visitors come to enjoy a vital and safe pedestrian experience.

#### **4.1.2 What Are Strategies for Achieving the Vision?**

A broad and concerted effort aimed at redefining University Avenue will include:

- ! Physical improvements to the street
- ! Alteration of the land use mix
- ! Implementation of design and maintenance standards
- ! Investment in quality, affordable housing
- ! Investment in the business community
- ! Investment in the people

Key strategies for implementing the overall vision (Figure 9) which were set forth in the University Avenue Strategic Development Plan and updated during the Specific Plan process include the following:

Figure 9 - Overall Vision and Development Strategy

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- ! **University-related housing:** Based on a market study by Keyser Marston Associates, Inc., the strongest demand for new development in the area is for student housing and other uses that cater to the needs of the growing University population.

Increasing housing in the area will act as a catalyst to improve the pedestrian environment, enhance development of retail and office space and help finance these improvements. Immediate development of housing is recommended north of University Avenue as a part of a mixed-use "village" adjacent to Iowa Avenue and on vacant University of California at Riverside lands south of the Avenue. See Section 4.2.5, Subdistrict 4b. for a further description of the vision for one housing site.

- ! **Initial focus on key public/private projects in strategic locations:** A major ingredient in the overall vision/development strategy is to focus on public/private projects in strategic locations along University Avenue to act as catalysts to stimulate development all along the corridor. An opportunities and constraints analysis of the physical conditions, ownership pattern, and market along the corridor found that such projects would be most appropriate on both ends of the corridor and in the middle of the corridor near Chicago Avenue (Figures 9 and 10):

- Fronting directly on University Avenue near UCR, the University Village Center will be oriented to faculty, students, visitors, and the overall community. The University Village Center is seen as a unique opportunity along University Avenue to create a town-gown village, in the tradition of Westwood Village near UCLA, Harvard Square in Boston, and the Marketplace in Irvine. A description of the vision for this follows in Section 4.2.4, Subdistrict 4a.
- At the west end of University Avenue, development of a neighborhood ethnic shopping center as a part of the Riverside Marketplace Project, with small restaurants and neighborhood services.
- Revitalization of the community shopping center on both sides of Chicago Avenue on the south side of University Avenue to include a mix of retail and office uses and perhaps housing in an intensely landscaped environment as further described in Section 4.2.3, Subdistrict 3.

Figure 10 - Physical Opportunities and Constraints to Development

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- ! **Small business opportunity area between Chicago Avenue and Park Avenue:** Between Chicago and Park Avenues where parcel widths are narrow and lack substantial depth, and where the residential uses of the Eastside Community are directly behind the commercial parcels along University Avenue, a small business area which serves this local community is envisioned as a landscaped and well-lighted environment oriented to the pedestrian. More neighborhood retail, restaurants, services and offices are encouraged on consolidated parcels to change the blighted conditions of the area consisting of an overconcentration of motels and auto uses, obsolete and boarded-up structures and pylon signs. A further description of the vision for this area follows in Section 4.2.1, Subdistrict 1.
- ! **Improvements to the remaining area:** Improvements in the remaining area are expected to occur primarily as private investment is made in the area. See Section 4.2.3, Subdistrict 3 for a description of the vision.
- ! **University Avenue developed as a one-of-a-kind unifying street:** A new and extensively landscaped streetscape will be the major unifying element for University Avenue, improving the visual quality of the Avenue and the pedestrian environment (Figure 11). Widening of the roadway pavement beyond four lanes will be limited for bike lanes, turn lanes at major intersections and for bus bays. Existing palms are generally remaining in place, and new ones are added, interspersed with new flowering trees along both sides of University Avenue. To enhance the pedestrian environment where possible, sidewalks are separated from the curb by the street trees. The use of citrus trees, thin water elements reminiscent of the Gage Canal, trellis elements for bus stops, historic pedestrian-scale lights and brick-like, accented paving will emphasize Riverside's heritage.
- ! **Transportation connection:** Economic vitality is critically dependent upon the ability of an area to function in the role of a destination for shopping, recreation, entertainment, and so forth. University Avenue's role as a link between Downtown and UCR means that investments need to be made in physical improvements which promote localized economic activity. A shuttle system, bikeways and a pedestrian network to link University Avenue, UCR and downtown is an integral part of the vision of the future for University Avenue.

Figure 11 - Proposed University Avenue Streetscape Between  
Iowa Avenue and Interstate-215

- ! **Development and design standards:** Adoption of standards through the Specific Plan will guide property owners in shaping new construction and remodeling to help bring about a unification and transformation of University Avenue. Abatement and amortization provisions can help facilitate conversion of land uses to new activities which are an integral part of the future character of University Avenue. Standards and guidelines herein stress a pedestrian-scale architecture and landscaping for areas adjacent to University Avenue, and will be used in the zoning and design review process.
- ! **Property maintenance and code enforcement:** New property maintenance standards and aggressive enforcement of the standards as well as existing standards, will substantially improve the physical environment.
- ! **Continuous crime watch and police patrol:** Continuation of the recent efforts by the University Avenue businesses and nearby residents of a crime watch program and active patrol by the Police Department will reduce crime and anti-social behavior which deter new businesses.
- ! **Promotion of economic activity:** Realization of the future economic potential of University Avenue should not preempt interim uses of property which can promote economic activity while preserving the ability to convert such uses at the appropriate time. The Specific Plan provides for such interim uses of property under specified conditions.
- ! **Partnership with the Eastside Community:** The role of University Avenue is a complex one. The Avenue is an important link between major anchors of the City. It serves city-wide purposes in both prominence and function. But the ownership, to a significant extent, rests with the Eastside Community, through which the Avenue extends over much of its length.

To the extent University Avenue and the Eastside Community are inseparable elements, the vision for the Avenue must also be a vision for the Community. Issues such as jobs, housing, child care, pride, ownership, safety, and empowerment, which are critical issues to any established community are by default a component of the Avenue's future.

These components together form the overall vision and development strategy for University Avenue and are interrelated. One component cannot be changed without affecting the other components.

## **4.2 Vision by Subdistrict**

A critical look at University Avenue quickly reveals its character of interrelated subdistricts. Each subdistrict recognizes the unique character of its individual segment of University Avenue. With its own unique land uses, and when combined with the other elements of the Specific Plan, each subdistrict will contribute to the realization of the vision for University Avenue.

Consistent with the general purposes of the University Avenue Specific Plan and the long-range vision of University Avenue, the following subdistricts are established as described in the "University Avenue Subdistrict Map," Figure 7.

### **4.2.1 Future Vision: Subdistrict 1 (Small Business Opportunity Area)**

To continue and enhance the small business area between Park and Chicago Avenues uses to serve the local adjacent community such as neighborhood retail, restaurants, services, and offices are encouraged in small - scale, red-tiled structures fronting on a landscaped

University Avenue corridor. Additional motel, auto and drive-through uses will be discouraged. Incentives such as a facade improvement program and redevelopment programs will be provided to encourage use of vacant, boarded-up structures, replacement of obsolete structures, and reuse of older historic homes. Within this Specific Plan, incentives are provided for property consolidation and shared parking and access to minimize curb cuts on University Avenue. University Avenue, in this Subdistrict, is planned as an extensively landscaped corridor, with the existing palms, the mature trees at Bobby Bonds Park, and new palms and shade trees separating the sidewalk from the curb, strengthening the visual image from the automobile and protecting the pedestrian from vehicular traffic. The combined 16-foot landscaped parkway and 20-foot setback for buildings on either side of University Avenue are landscaped and lighted by pedestrian-scale lighting fixtures. Building entrances face this landscaped parkway on University Avenue and parking is at the rear of the parcel, rather than in the front yard.

#### **4.2.2 Future Vision: Subdistrict 2 (Community Shopping Center Area).**

Subdistrict 2 includes the south side of University Avenue from Ottawa Avenue to approximately 600 feet east of Chicago Avenue and currently is characterized by fast food restaurants, full service restaurants, motels, banks and auto service uses on small parcels. In addition, there are shopping centers on either side of Chicago Avenue, the older Town Square project, and the newer Chicago Center Shopping area of approximately 17 acres and 8 acres respectively.

The vision for this Subdistrict is to continue the shopping center uses as well as entertainment, office and restaurant uses in rehabilitated existing structures and completely new structures. Both sides of Chicago Avenue, the University Avenue frontage, are proposed to be linked together architecturally, with landscaping and with aligned pedestrian and vehicular crossings along Chicago Avenue, to create the appearance of one coherent

center. Extensive landscaping, including the parking lot, is intended as a major element, as well as connections through to the adjacent residential community. An opportunity is provided to include residential uses within a planned mixed-use environment subject to specific development standards.

#### **4.2.3 Future Vision: Subdistrict 3 (Visitor Commercial and University-Related Use Area)**

Currently, Subdistrict 3 contains larger and taller structures than the remainder of University Avenue. Visitor-serving uses, such as the Hampton Inn, the Days Inn, and the Holiday Inn are interspersed with older offices, banks, retail shopping, restaurants and service stations. Also in this subdistrict, the University has begun to purchase land for University-related facilities. The vision for Subdistrict 3 is to continue the current trend of a mix of visitor-serving/retail commercial, restaurants, offices and University-related facilities and larger structures fronting on a tree-lined University Avenue. Streetscape improvements and design standards and guidelines will contribute to improving the architectural and landscaping environment. The pedestrian environment is to be improved by the addition of palms, shade trees and street furniture as part of a widened sidewalk along University Avenue. A landscaped median with thematic accent trees will help to reduce the perceived width of the street. The pedestrian connection to UCR for the area is planned to be reduced by the elimination of the free right-turn portion of the on-ramp to I-215 and the construction of a land bridge over I-215 from UCR to the University lands south of University Avenue. In order to reinforce the intended pedestrian environment, new structures will be encouraged to have an architectural style that draws from Riverside's heritage.

#### **4.2.4 Future Vision Subdistrict 4a (Mixed-Use Development Area)**

##### **A Unique Opportunity Along University Avenue.**

The University Village Center is a unique, one-of-a-kind opportunity to help strengthen the ties between the campus and the community and improve the surrounding environment. The University Village Center is envisioned as a mixed-use, town/gown village in the tradition of Westwood Village adjacent to the University of California in Los Angeles, Harvard Square adjacent to Harvard University, College Avenue in Berkeley, adjacent to the University of California, and the new Marketplace adjacent to the University in Irvine (Figure 12).

The Downtown/Central Industrial Development Implementation Plan designated the area surrounding the intersection of Iowa and University Avenues as a UCR Village. The analysis of opportunities and constraints, physical characteristics, and market factors, and ownership patterns (85 percent in two ownerships) suggest that the initial University Village Center be located in Subdistrict 4, a triangular area of approximately 16 acres north of University, defined by I-215, University Avenue, and Iowa Avenue. This site is close enough to the University to encourage pedestrian and bicycle traffic, the large exposure on University Avenue will have an immediate impact on the character of University Avenue, and its adjacency to I-215 should make it attractive to retail and office users.

### **A Mixed-Use Village**

To attract students and the community, the University Village Center is planned to be a unique environment, with special uses, not a traditional shopping center typically found on a highway-oriented street. The proposed character is "village-like", with retail shops, restaurants, a theater and other entertainment facilities clustered around a series of outdoor courtyards. A pedestrian paseo with ample room for outdoor dining, artwork, shopping, performers and strolling is also anticipated. Housing is proposed to be a vital part of the center, keeping the area an active environment, popular throughout the day and evening. University oriented uses, such as a satellite bookstore or University administrative offices and professional offices would also be part of the mix, further adding to the character. Retail tenants would include such shops as small apparel stores, athletic wear stores, audio and video stores, poster stores/graphic arts supply, book stores, stationery/greeting card outlets, coffee shops, yogurt and ice cream shops, lunch and dinner restaurants, dry cleaners, copy shops, hair styling salons, travel agents, photo processing facilities and florists.

The architectural scale would vary from one to four stories and reflect early California or Mediterranean design concepts while allowing expressions of contemporary accents. The landscape design will be composed of a variety of formal and informal clusters of palm, citrus and shade trees. Hanging pots, pedestrian-scale lights, and planters are expected to enliven the balconies, courtyards and paseos. Initially, all uses should have adequate surface parking, however, accommodation is made for structured parking at a later date. Figure 8 illustrates the architectural character envisioned for this mixed-use village catering to the community, visitors, and University students, staff and faculty.

#### **4.2.5 Future Vision: Subdistrict 4b (Mixed-Use Development Area)**

Subdistrict 4b is envisioned as primarily a multi-family housing area catering to the University populace and with some ground level retail along Iowa Avenue. The extensively landscaped site would have a campus-like environment consisting of two- and three- story buildings clustered around courtyards and interesting outdoor spaces with trellises, awnings, potted plants, arches, and arbors. In keeping with the overall landscaping theme for University Avenue, citrus trees, palms, water elements and textured paving, and a network of pedestrian paths are a part of this garden concept. A strong pedestrian and vehicular connection is proposed to link this residential complex with University Village Center in Subdistrict 4 and together Subdistrict 4a and 4b are expected to form an exciting, viable mixed-use complex anchoring the eastern end of University Avenue.

Figure 12 - University Centers Adjacent to Other Universities

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With implementation of the standards and guidelines in this Specific Plan and a partnership of the public and private sectors working together, this vital, memorable vision for University Avenue can be realized.